S A N A T A N

Pratnakirttimapavrinu
(Let us attempt to unravel the glorious past – *Rigveda*)

Edited by
Dr Alok Tripathi

Issue 14 **06.12.2008** **Year 1. No. 17&18**



Harihara, British Museum, London (source : Alok Tripathi)

I am a great believer in luck and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.
- Thomas Jefferson

CONTENTS

Editorial	2	Lectures	11
Rock-art	3	Photo-feature	12
Discovery	8	In News	16
Seminar/Conference	9	Exhibition	17
Events	9	Views	19
Publications	10		

EDITORIAL

Dear Colleagues

The seed sown as Sanatan few months back has not only grown but also has started delivering fruits. We are receiving information from the members who utilised the information shared in Sanatan. We also receive numerous queries from the members asking about the kind of information included in Sanatan.

We have been reiterating time and again that it is an open forum for sharing news and views, which you feel be of any importance to your colleagues. Due to space constrain we are not in position to include all the contributions from the members but we make serious attempt to include as much as possible. The information which we feel is of interest to some persons or institutions is forwarded to them for taking further action in the matter. Our prime concern is that the art, culture and heritage need to be preserved, and we take the course which seems most appropriate.

We still find some old practices being followed by our colleagues. Any tradition, which is not based on merit, irrespective for how long it has been followed, can not be accepted in academics. In the present time of globalization we all need to change and accept best practices.

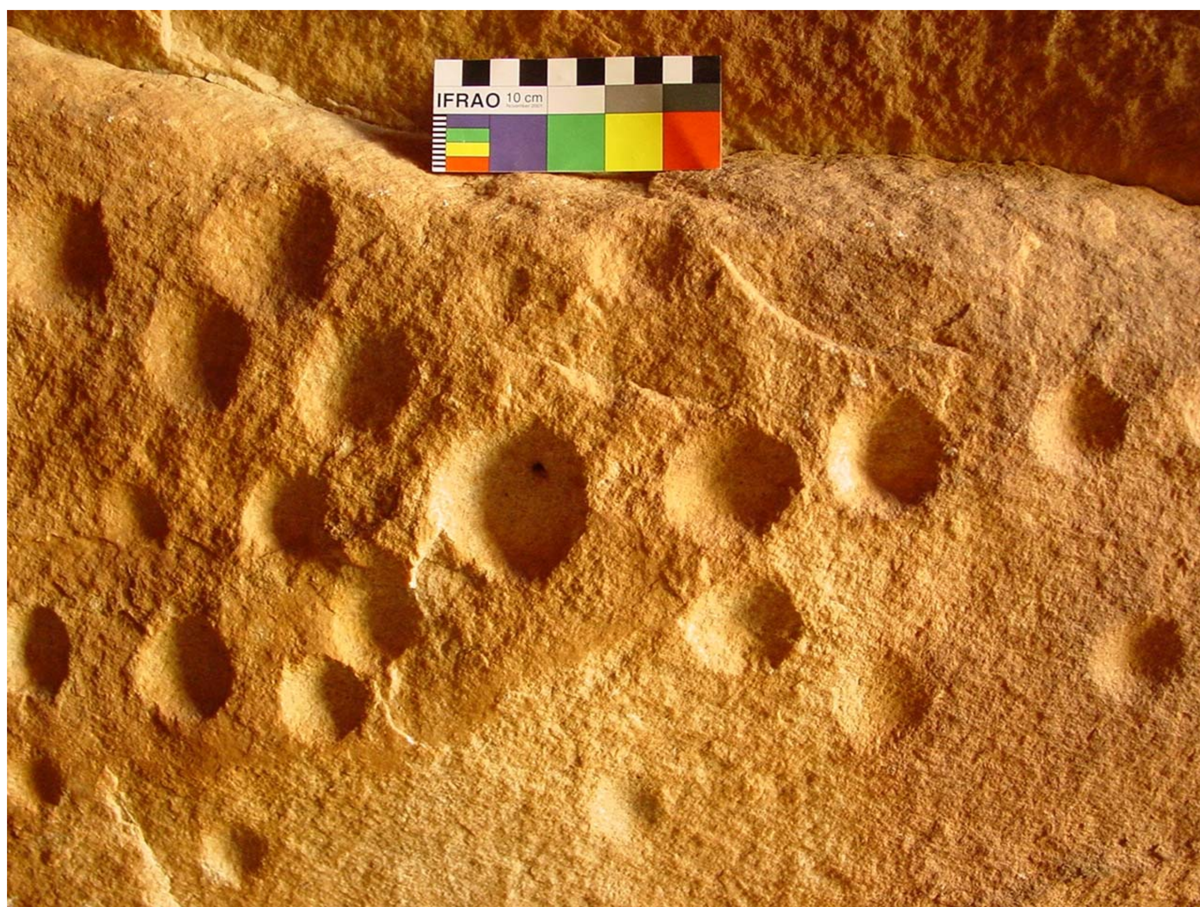
Editor

ROCK-ART

Daraki-Chattan and Chaturbhujnath Nala, District Mandsaur, M.P.

The international expert's seminar on, 'Prehistory and the World Heritage Convention: Towards an action plan and the related thematic studies' was held at UNESCO, Paris.

In the rock-art working group, Indian expert recommended that Daraki-Chattan cave, the only site in the world having more than five hundred Lower Palaeolithic cupules, and Chaturbhujnath nala, the longest rock-art gallery of the world, be given a World Heritage status by UNESCO. Both the sites of Outstanding Universal Value are located in Chambal basin in Bhanpura region of district Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh.



Daraki-Chattan Cave : Cupules on the southern wall (source : RASI)

Rock-art is a global phenomenon and need to be studied and understood in global perspective to make it scientifically useful. UNESCO has observed that the representation of rock-art sites in Asia and Africa is inadequate, and there should be greater representation of them.

Nomination of Bhimbetka is the only Indian rock-art site on the list. There are many more potential rock-art sites in India, and in other Asian countries especially in Saudi Arabia and China. Initially two more Indian rock-art sites in central India, which are unique and are of outstanding universal significance, should be recommended for nomination.

Daraki-Chattan

Daraki-Chattan is a small cave in the upper strata of quartzite buttresses of Indragarh hill in Chambal basin in central India. It is a rich Palaeolithic cupule site, bearing more than five-hundred cupules on its walls. The excavations carried out here under the EIP Project for five seasons from 2002 to 2006, have established that the antiquity of the cupules in the cave goes to the beginning of Lower Palaeolithic period.



Daraki-Chattan Cave (source : RASI)

It overlooks a rift valley, through which flows a small perennial river Rewa. 8.4 m. deep and 7.75 m. heigh cave is conical in shape. It is 1.4 m. wide at its mouth and narrows down to 20 cm. at the end. The front portion of the walls bears many exfoliation scars and is almost devoid of cupules. The exfoliated slabs bearing cupules were buried in the sediments in the vestibule of the cave.

In order to decide the antiquity of the early Indian cupules a multidisciplinary project, "Early Indian Petroglyphs: Scientific Investigations and Dating by International Commission" (EIP Project) was carried out and Daraki-Chattan was excavated from 2002 to 2006. Besides, the surrounding region was also explored, which brought to light 20 more sites having Palaeolithic cupules. The excavation proved that Daraki-Chattan is a Lower Palaeolithic site, and was occupied by the users of chopper-chopping tools. It remained in use till the transitional phase from Lower Palaeolithic to Middle Palaeolithic. The site has yielded hundreds of stone artifacts. Many exfoliated slab pieces bearing 28 cupules were discovered from the excavated sediments. Seven of them could be joined together forming a nearly one meter long slab bearing seven cupules. The period of cupule manufacture at Daraki-Chattan, or at least in earlier phase, coincide with chopping tool industry.



Daraki-Chattan Cave : Other artefacts from excavation (source : RASI)

A large *in situ* boulder close to bedrock bears a weathered cupule. It means the antiquity of the cupules, at least some of them, is greater than the earliest archaeological antiquity of the excavated cupules, as it might have taken many years for their weathering and falling down to be buried in the sediments. Thus, the cupule production tradition at Daraki-Chattan starts from the earliest phase of Lower Palaeolithic period. It also proved that the earliest hominins in Chambal basin in India were capable of creating cupules, the earliest form of rock-art.

It has great significance to world prehistory establishing that modern construct of communication, symbolism and culture developed in Lower Palaeolithic period. Africa might have been the center of physical development of hominids, but South Asia, particularly India as the present evidences show, was the epicenter of cognitive development, communication, symbols and culture even in Lower Palaeolithc period. This needs to change the mindset to accept the cultural, cognitive or technological sophistication of the early hominins.

Chaturbhujnath Nala

Chaturbhujnath nala (lat. 24^{o} 42.86’ N., long. 75^{o} 40’ 12’’ E.) is one of the nature’s wonders, utilised by hominins for their creative manifestations. The Chaturbhujnath rock-art site is located in Gandhisagar game sanctuary about 7 km. deep in the forest area from the road. Rock-art there is still in pristine condition, almost undisturbed. The site is presently protected by the Archaeological Survey of India.

The rock-shelters at Chaturbhujnath nala are low in height and are scattered in more than 2 km. length in six groups, numbered from A to G. Rock-shelter groups B to E on its right bank and F on its left bank form a continuous art gallery of 600 m. in length. The site, having more than 2600 figures, is of outstanding universal value as it forms the longest continuous rock-art gallery in the world.



Chaturbhujnath nala (source : RASI)

These figures present a clear picture of transition from hunting-food-gathering to pastoral cultural stage of life. Besides, it also presents different shades of perception of reality and a colourful picture of pastoral life from the beginning to almost present day. In this long tradition of creativity in the Holocene period, the art depicts the spirit of celebration of life

through the ages. Four Lower Palaeolithc factory sites have been located on the banks of Chaturbhujnath nala. Microlith factory sites are also in plenty on its both the banks.



Daraki-Chattan Cave : Close up of the cupule lying close to bedrock (source : RASI)

Both the sites are in pristine condition, almost undisturbed by human vandalism. It presents clear evidence of transition from hunting food gathering to pastoral cultural stage, and presents various stages of technological, cognitive and cultural development in different activities of life in Holocene period. Government of India may nominate Daraki-Chattan and Chaturbhujnath nala rock-art sites for declaration as world heritage by the UNESCO under serial nomination along with Bhimbetka.

There is also need to get more work done for other significant rock-art sites in the country so that there are many rock-art sites on the of world heritage map. It will have a great impact for establishing India as the global player in rock-art.

- Giriraj Kumar
Rock Art Society of India, Agra

DISCOVERIES

Buddha's Skull found in Nanjing, China

Chinese archaeologists have claimed that a 1,000-year-old miniature pagoda, unearthed in Nanjing, holds a piece of Buddha's skull. The four-storey pagoda is almost four feet high and one-and-a-half feet wide. The pagoda wedged tightly inside an iron case that was discovered at the site of a former temple in the city in August. It is thought to be one of the 84,000 pagodas commissioned by Ashoka to house the remains of the Buddha.

The pagoda is crafted from wood, gilded with silver and inlaid with gold, coloured glass and amber. It matches a description of another of Ashoka's pagodas which used to be housed underneath the Changgan Buddhist temple in Nanjing. Ashoka is widely credited with spreading Buddhism throughout Asia, and across his kingdom, which stretched from Pakistan through Afghanistan and into Iran.

A description of the contents of the pagoda was also found: a gold coffin bearing part of Buddha's skull inside a silver box. Although scans have confirmed that there are two small metal boxes inside the pagoda, experts have not yet peered inside. The pagoda is currently on display in the museum.

This pagoda may be unique, the only one known to contain parts of Buddha's skull. There would be a lengthy process before the cases could be opened. In 2001, Chinese authorities had found a case that was said to contain a relic of Buddha's hair, but declined to open the welded box in case it damaged the contents.

The discovery of the relic will have a huge influence on the cultural history of Buddhism in China and will establish Nanjing as a premier site. It will be a great encouragement for Buddhists as well as for future studies. The second World Buddhist Forum, a gathering of monks and scholars from around the world, will take place near Nanjing next year in Wuxi.

[source: http://scitechnewsdailyindia.blogspot.com/2008/11/buddha-skull-found-in-1000-year-old.html, http://www.azibaza.com/blg/?p=331]

CONFERENCES / SEMINARS

Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology, March 2009, Williamsburg, Virginia

37th annual international conference on Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology (CAA) would be held on 22-26 March 2009 at Williamsburg, Virginia. The theme of the conference is "Making History Interactive". Deadline for paper and poster abstracts for presentation at the conference is 19th December 2008.

CAA is dedicated to the application of digital technologies that make it possible to access and investigate cultural heritage in new ways. Using digital technologies, archaeologists can interact with the historical record, to push the boundaries of interpretation and further our understanding of the past. The conference is sponsored by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the University of Virginia.

CAA 2009 Organizing Committee also invite proposals for sessions, individual papers, poster presentations, workshops, and round table discussions related to the conference theme as well as other CAA topics. For further information on submitting a proposal, please visit CAA 2009 website.

[source:http://safecorner.savingantiquities.org/2008/11/caa-2009-call-for-papers-and-posters.html]

EVENTS

Jeep Rally for heritage

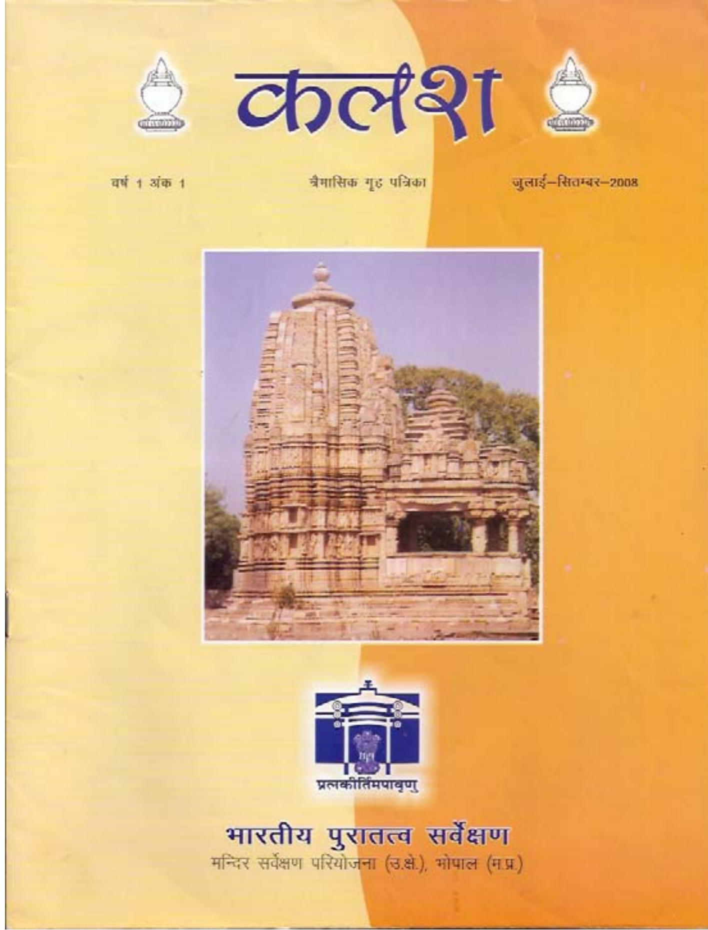
Six-kilometre-long off-road Ford & Willys Jeep Rally 2008 was held in Jaipur to promote the cultural heritage of Jaipur. Jeep racers participated in the rally held at the outskirts of the city on the ravines near Kukas. The rally was organised by Rajputana Jeep Club, in association with The Times of India, Jet Airways and Citibank. Former Navy chief Admiral Madhvendra Singh was the eldest participant in the rally.

Every jeep participated in the rally had a unique story behind their acquisition. Thirty-five participants begin their journey from Ashok Club to Dera Amer near Kukas in the form of rally, then they began the race on the principle of time distance and speed on the ravines and deserted land near Kukas. Most of the jeeps used by the racers had fielded in the wars between 1943 and 1953.

[source: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Jaipur/Wheel_power_War-worn_vehicles_rally_for_heritage/articleshow/3693390.cms]

PUBLICATIONS

***Kalash*, Quarterly House Magazine, Temple Survey Project**



Temple Survey Project (TSP), Northern Region, Bhopal brought out inaugural issue of its quarterly house magazine *Kalash*. First issue (July-September) is dedicated to Shri Krishna Deva, the first Super-intending Archaeologist of the TSP.

TSP was established in 1955 and since then has carried out study of Chandella temples at Khajuraho, Gupta, Pratihara, Paramara temples, Brick temples, and temples of Mithila region. Presently temples of Kachchhpaghata are being studied. Based on the works of the TSP two volumes on Pratihara and Chandella temples have also been published .

First issue include message of the Director-General, Superintending Archaeologist and editor, some general information on Archaeological Survey of India, a list of temples under the Bhopal Circle of ASI, and certain other activities. *Kalash* is published in Hindi.

The magazine would include information on research on temples, their studies and conservation. Scholars and researchers can send information pertaining to temples to the Superintending Archaeologist, TSP, Bhopal.

Since the publication is brought out by the Archaeological Survey of India editor would have to insure that the information included and published in the magazine is authentic and technically correct.

LECTURES

Dr B.R. Mani : Ancient Gandhara: Then and Now



Dr B.R. Mani, Joint Director-General, Archaeological Survey of India delivered an illustrated lecture entitled 'Ancient Gandhara: Then and Now' at India International Center on 18 November 2008.



Dr Mani informed about the present condition of certain archaeological sites and ancient monuments in Pakistan, which he visited recently. He also spoke about the recent archaeological discoveries and researches in Pakistan. Among these finding of Saiva monastery, seals, sculptures, coins, ornaments and other objects unearthed during the excavations at Kashmir Smast and inscriptions in Kohi script generated great curiosity among scholars.



The lecture attended by a good number of scholars was chaired by Prof. R.C. Agarwal, former Joint Director-General, Archaeological Survey of India.

Dr Lisa Mitchell : The Making of a Mother Tongue

Dr Lisa Mitchell, Assistant Professor, Department of South Asia Studies, University of Pennsylvania delivered a lecture on 'The Making of a Mother Tongue: Rethinking Histories of Language and Ethnicity in Southern India' on 1 December 2008 in India International Center.

Using Telugu literary histories, travel narratives, lexicons, grammars, and textbooks, as well as archival and ethnographic research speaker demonstrated that the relationship to language in southern India that emerged in the early twentieth century differs dramatically from the relationships to language that existed in earlier centuries.

The lecture organized in collaboration with American Institute of Indian Studies was chaired by Prof. Shahid Amin, Professor of History, University of Delhi

PHOTO FEATURE

Dr B.R. Mani, Joint Director-General, Archaeological Survey of India visited Pakistan in August 2008. During his recent visit he photographed famous archaeological site Taxila which was excavated in 1930's. These photographs taken by him reveal the condition of ancient remains after 70 years of their excavation. This comparison informs about the maintenance of archaeological site and tells the status of conservation of site at present.



Taxila : Bhir mound, after excavation (1930)



Taxila : Bhir mound (2008)




Taxila : Sirkap




Sirkap : Stupa of double-headed eagle




Sirkap: Apsidal temple




Sirkap : Dharmarajika stupa complex




Sirkap : Stupa J1, Dharmarajika stupa complex



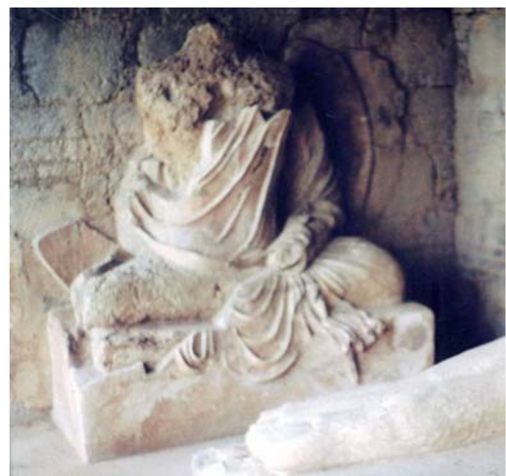

Sirkap : Stupa J1, Dharmarajika stupa complex

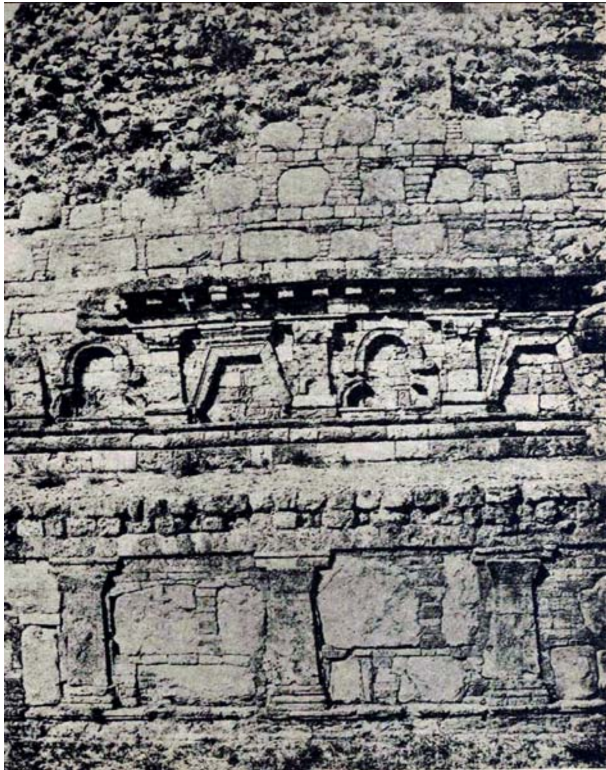



Jaulian monastery

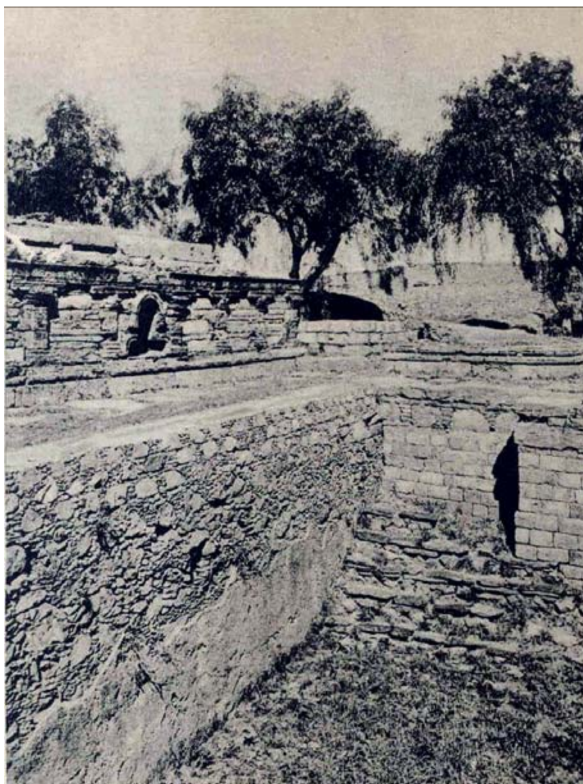


Sirkap : Stucco image, Chapel 18, Dharmarajika stupa complex






Sirkap : Dharmarajika stupa




Sirkap : Tank, Dharmarajika stupa complex

- B.R. Mani
Joint Director-General, ASI, New Delhi

IN NEWS

McDonald's Manager in charge of Italy's Museums

Culture Ministry in Italy has appointed Mario Resca, 62, as director general of museums and archeological sites. Resca worked for McDonald's for 15 years and was head of the fast food chain's operations in Italy but has no experience in arts management. He is expected to start injecting the dusty world of museum curators with some 21st century business savvy during his three year stint in the top job.

This controversial decision has raised fears among cultural guardians, who have been wondering - "What's the link between hamburgers and the extraordinary cultural heritage of Italy?" An online petition against the appointment has so far attracted more than 1,000 signatures from art curators and museum directors around the world. The concern is that the government is shifting its role from custodian mandated to protect Italy's cultural heritage to entrepreneur free to exploit it.

Italy has about 4,000 museums, out of which around 400 are government owned. These museums staffed by heavily unionised employees are often deeply resistant to change. Italy's most visited museum, the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, attract 1.5 million visitors a year where as the British Museum in London pulls in close to six million. Italian museums having some of humanity's best known artistic masterpieces, from Etruscan bronzes to the wonders of the Renaissance are not in the world's 10 most visited museums. He feels that less number of visitors in Italian museums is a huge failure.

While the government is slashing the national arts budget, the former fast food manager plans to generate funds under a radical reform. World Heritage attractions such as Rome's Colosseum and the preserved city of Pompeii will be made to pay their own way.

He also feels that the world famous Roman ruins such as Herculaneum, Pompeii and Rome's Forum could prove a spectacular backdrop to product launches, as long as it is ensured that there is no damage. Culture ministry has also discussed the possibility of renting works of art to foreign museums, another proposal that provoked fierce outcries among cultural officials.

[source :http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/3515335/McDonalds-boss-in-charge-of-Italys-museums.htmlandhttp://www.artinfo.com/news/story/29590/italians-outraged-by-changes-to-culture-ministry/]

EXHIBITION

Faberge: Precious Jewellery of the Russian Empire

An exhibition - 'Faberge: Precious Jewellery of the Russian Empire' is held in the National Museum, New Delhi. It is for the first time it has come out from the Russian Federation. The exhibition was been inaugurated by Mr Alexander Avdeev, Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation, together with Smt Ambika Soni, Tourism and Culture Minister, Government of India, and Dr. Karan Singh, President, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, on 5th December 208.



Lilies-of-the-valley Egg
(source : Exhibition Catalogue)



Cossack Equerry of Empress Maria Fyodorovna A A Kudinov
(source : Exhibition Catalogue)

The exhibition showcases 196 pieces, valued at $26 million, from leading Russian museums such as the Museums of Moscow Kremlin, State Historical Museum of Russian Academy of Sciences, Pavlovsk State Museum Reserve and Cultural and Historical Foundation "The Link of Times".

The exhibition showcase one of the finest artistic works of Faberge, who was the world-renowned jeweler. His craft of making intricate pieces of jewellery, artifacts and miniature showpieces, was unparalleled in the last quarter of nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century. These pieces in exhibition depict the events of his time and the turbulent history of Russia.



Bay Tree Egg
(source : Exhibition Catalogue)

The finest expression of his artistry was perhaps the Easter Eggs, executed in Art Nouveau style. From 1898 to 1902, the House of Faberge produced three eggs in this latest fashion: The Lillies-of-the-Valley, The Pansy with miniatures of Empress Maria Fyodorovna's children and grandchildren on a heart-shaped easel, and the Clover with portraits of Nicholas II's daughters. Each one of the pieces is a bejewelled testimony of his genius.



Cockerel Egg
(source : Exhibition Catalogue)



Coronation Egg (source : Exhibition Catalogue)

Apart form the Easter Eggs, there are intricately carved exotic pieces like the Figurines of Lifeguards in Urals, enamel and sapphire, three legged Goblet with carved ornament in quart, Lilies of Valley in gold, pearls and nephrite, animals mouse, snail, owl and elephant trinket in agate, blood stone carved with rubies, browenite, etc. The exhibition will be on public view till 18 January 2009.

- Anamika Pathak
National Museum, New Delhi

VIEWS

Sanatan is growing fast and spreading its wings. I am happy to find vide variety and useful information. I am sure many members are getting benefited by the current information it provides regularly.

Earlier there were some good discussions and members had addressed vital issues. I feel such discussions on important issues should continue. All of us should come out with our ideas, debate them openly and form common views to be followed by all.

It would be great if you start a permanent column dedicated to academic debates.

T.A.R. Gopalan, Chennai

Send your views, information, materials to sanatan08082008@gmail.com for sharing.